

Practical Approaches to Assessment in the String Classroom

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www.OrchestraTeacher.net



Why Assess?

- Drive instruction
 - Provides teachers with helpful data
- Motivate students
 - Students WILL practice for a playing test
- Can further legitimize music as a “real” subject

What to avoid...

- Utilizing a single type of assessment
- Grading based on “participation”
- Grading based on attendance
- Getting stuck in a grading rut

Additional Considerations

- Frequent assessments will have greater meaning
- Try shorter excerpts over longer ones
- Be clear in your expectations. Plan ahead!
- Avoid pop-quiz tests if possible
- Use formative feedback to encourage growth
- Consider dropping the lowest test score

Assessment...

- Is important for student growth and development
- Comes in MANY forms
- Is not “one size fits all”
- Must be creative to find ways to implement
- Requires some investment of planning and instructional time
- Can be fun for students (and teachers!)

Self-Assessment

- Start asking students to self-assess from day one!
- Students must be able to evaluate good and poor, correct and incorrect
- Most of the student's practice time is away from you and your instruction
- Our goal should be to develop our students into *independent* musicians

Peer Assessment

- A powerful and effective strategy
- Can keep students engaged in class by reducing down time
- Examples:
 - “Fist to Five” rating system
 - Asking students to assess how some was performed by another section or individual

Grading Performances

- Rubrics help clarify strengths and weaknesses
- All performance grading has an element of subjectivity
- Think about how a 1-10 rating system impacts the grade the student receives.
- 10 = A, 9 = A-⁺, 8=B-, 7=C-, 6=D-, 5 and less = F

The Playing Test Rubric

- Use a detailed rubric
- Help students better understand their grade
- Provide students with formative feedback that allows them to improve performance in the future

Finding the Best Rubrics

- Don't always reinvent the wheel!
- Use materials from books, resources, and others
- Create your own rubrics!
 - Online tools such as RubiStar - <http://rubistar.4teachers.org>

Name _____ Date _____

Music Exercise _____

The checked boxes show two elements of your performance that were particularly strong.

- ☐ Key signature
- ☐ Pitches
- ☐ Intonation
- ☐ Rhythm
- ☐ Pulse
- ☐ Bowing style
- ☐ Technique
- ☐ Tone
- ☐ Phrasing

Comments:

From *Performance Assessment in Orchestra* by Wendy Barden (Kjos Music)

- ☐ Rhythms
- ☐ Pulse
- ☐ Bowing style
- ☐ Technique
- ☐ Tone
- ☐ Phrasing
- ☐ Dynamics

- ☐ Use my comments and keep practicing this exercise. Be sure to talk to me if you have questions or need help. Replay exercise:

- ☐ Assignment complete.

Form 1.2: Developing Fundamentals

CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA PLAYING EXAM RUBRIC

NAME: _____

Exam No. _____

Category	10pts	9.9 – 9pts	8.9 – 8pts	7.9 – 7pts	6.9 – 6pts	5.9 – 5pts	4 – 1pts
Rhythm and Pulse	Exceptional and rarely given. Performed all passage with perfect rhythmic execution and with solid and clear rhythmic (pulse) 'direction' and drive/'groove'	Excellent. One or two MINOR rhythmic errors. Almost exceptional, but is unconvincing of rhythmic direction/drive/'groove'	Good. One of two <i>moderate</i> rhythmic errors and/or two minor instances where students get off with the metronome.	Average. 3-4 <i>moderate/major</i> rhythmic errors, or 1 entire passage (or almost entire) where playing is not together with the metronome/pulse.	Passing. Several (4-6) rhythmic errors throughout. Or 2 passages where playing is not together with the metronome/pulse.	Unsatisfactory/Failing. Numerous rhythmic errors throughout. 3 passages (or half of the excerpts) not matching with the metronome/pulse.	Unacceptable. Almost total lack of rhythm, no passages matching with the metronome/pulse.
Rhy/Puls Score							
Musicality	Exceptional and rarely given. All excerpts are performed at excellent level <i>and</i> in addition evoke an emotional reaction.	Excellent. Performed all excerpts with appropriate phrasing, all dynamics, articulation, and proper style. All elements are executed <i>convincingly</i> .	Good. Performed <i>most</i> excerpts with appropriate phrasing, observed all dynamics, articulation, and proper style. All elements are executed <i>somewhat convincingly</i> .	Average. Only few evidences of phrasing, dynamics, articulation, and little demonstration of proper style.	Passing. Demonstrates only few instances of only few concepts (phrasing, dynamics, articulation, style).	Unsatisfactory/Failing. Only one or two instances of musical expression of any kind.	Unacceptable. No evidence of musicianship.
Musicality Score							
Technique, bowings, and notes.	Exceptional and rarely	Excellent. One of two	Good. One or two	Average. 3-4	Passing. Several (4-6)	Unsatisfactory/Failing.	Unacceptable. Almost al lack of clarity and accuracy.
Technique Score							
Intonation							Unacceptable. Total lack of pitch center throughout all passages.
Intonation Score							
Tone Quality	Exceptional and rarely given. Plays with resonant and full sound. Vibrato is nuanced/expressionist, and bow appropriately to produce tone.	Excellent. Plays most of the time with resonant and full sound or not too harsh. Vibrato is nice, appropriate, and controlled. Uses the bow appropriately.	Good. Couple of instances where entire excerpts are weak or too harsh. Couple of excerpts lack vibrato. One or two instances where bow usage for tone (if appropriate) is lacking.	Average. Half of the excerpts where almost entire excerpts are played with weak sound (when not appropriate), or lack vibrato. 3-4 instances where bow usage for tone production is lacking.	Passing. Some evidence of good tone and vibrato, but mostly lacking. Bow usage for quality tone is mostly not considered by the performer.	Unsatisfactory/Failing. Almost all excerpts lack a sense of tone, resonance, and almost no vibrato.	Unacceptable. Total lack of tone, resonance, and vibrato. Bow usage is totally ignored for tone production.
Tone Score							
Directions and Prep	Exceptional and should be given often! Followed all directions and demonstrates strong evidence of preparation.	Excellent. Strong evidence of preparation, but minor case and directions not followed.	Good. Strong evidence of preparation, and/or couple of minor cases of directions not followed.	Average. Good evidence of preparation, and/or one major issue of directions not followed.	Passing. Some evidence of preparation, and/or one or two major issues of direction not followed. <i>HIGHEST POINT POSSIBLE IF HANDED IN LATE.</i>	Unsatisfactory/Failing. Only followed one/two directions.	Unacceptable. No regard for directions.
Direction Score							

High School Orchestra Playing Exam Rubric
 Carmel High School Orchestra
 Soo Han, conductor

Comments:

Final Score: _____/60

Online Playing Test Rubric

- Create in Google Forms or use another web form
- <http://www.orchestrateacher.net/mued-3351-test-4/>
- <http://www.orchestrateacher.net/mued-3351-test-6/>

Recording Student Performance Assessments

- Record in class, during rehearsal
- Record outside of class, during rehearsal
- Record outside of class, at home
- What are the positives and negatives of each?

Individual Video Assessment

- Captures correct (or incorrect!) technique, unlike audio
- Build a digital portfolio
- Seamlessly integrate into rehearsal time

Video Portfolios

- Archive tracks student progress and achievements
- Good to show students when they are considering dropping out or not seeing their progress
- Great for administration and parent conferences

Essential Elements Interactive (EEi)

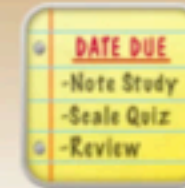
- Interactive music studio allows students to record and instantly compare multiple “takes”
- Students must then compare which take is the best before sending to teacher for assessment
- "Practice it until you get it" mentality

Practice Studio in Essential Elements Interactive



HAL LEONARD
**ESSENTIAL
ELEMENTS**
Interactive
Beta Release 1.0

Charles Laux, HL Music Music | [My Account](#) | [Help](#) | [Sign Out](#)



CURRENT ASSIGNMENTS

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS

PRACTICE LOGS

GRADE REPORT

Current Assignments

1-3 of 3 assignments

Show:

Upcoming

Sort By:

Date (Ascending)

Mar
3
Mon

Recording Test #57



Tribal Lament

Total Points: 100

No Resources

Mar
3
Mon

Recording Test #73



Buckeye Salute

Total Points: 100

No Resources

Sep
22
Mon

Test



The Long Haul

Total Points: 100

No Resources

Coach's Eye

- Inexpensive app for iOS, Android, and Windows
- Designed for use in athletics
- Great tool for string player assessment
 - Captures performance
 - Allows teacher to record commentary and upload/share

Demo

Rehearsal Assessment

- Record a portion of your rehearsal
- Listen on way home from school
- Post on blog and have students make comments (moderate)

Practice Logs?

- Students often don't know how to practice
- We must explain and demonstrate practice strategies to our students
- Sometimes students need organization of their practice material

HPO #7 - Concert Orch. Practice Checklist Name _____ Per: _____

Practice/Review each one of these checklist items AT LEAST 4 times. Pay close attention to detail – rhythm, bowing, dynamics, fingerings, and all small details. **Due Tuesday, Oct. 19 – no later!**

Sonata Vivant

- ☐ m. 1-11 – big forte opening, into bridge (lane 4-5), controlled slurs, driving tempo
- ☐ m. 11- 18 – breathe during rests, full quarter notes
- ☐ m. 18-29 – 2nd/viola: think DOWN bows, watch & listen. 1st/Cello – playful and light
- ☐ m. 29-35 – full sound!
- ☐ m. 35-53 – smooth, legato, singing style. Less bow pressure, but good speed.
- ☐ m. 53-66 – agitated, forceful. Keep 8ths tight into string, not huge bows. PUSH. Count!!
- ☐ m. 67-end – 1st violins: works slowly and carefully. Keep fingers down. Everyone else, breathe during rests, prepare accents at the end.

Gauntlet

- ☐ practice the D minor scale: D, E, F natural, G, A, Bb, C, D
- ☐ ALL MELODY PARTS: Practice SLOWLY!! Listen for intonation, especially when crossing strings
- ☐ m. 1-10 – think “in 2” 80 BPM. Check www.webmetronome.com. Melodies: Be ready! Count. Work all melody very slowly and carefully for PERFECT intonation.
- ☐ m. 10-17 – Violin: Don’t slow down; Viola: keep steady eighths; Cello/Bass: nice solid melody. Do the crescendo/diminendo at m. 11-13, then huge crescendo at m. 15-16
- ☐ m. 17-25 – Violins: careful intonation, check m. 20 – keep staccato in middle of bow.
- ☐ m. 25-33 – Cello: Nice melody. Watch 4th finger intonation; 1st violin: bring out moving parts; Everyone: big crescendo at m. 31-32
- ☐ m. 33-39 – same as m. 17 section
- ☐ m. 40-48 – Cello/bass: watch low F natural; Violin/Viola – COUNT!!! COUNT AGAIN!!!!; Everyone: Notice the subtle dynamic changes...
- ☐ m. 48-55 – cello/bass: bring our melody, into bridge; Viola: more power at 52 (lane 5).
- ☐ m. 56-79 – Everyone: bring out MOVING parts (quarter notes). Also, change half/whole notes accurately. Watch the conductor!! Notice all of the subtle dynamic changes.
- ☐ 95-end – 2nd violin/cello: Bring out melody. 1st violin: big, full bows. Viola/Bass: keep steady!

Mabel Creek Overture

- ☐ Everyone: Practice the A minor scale: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A. Arpeggio: A, C, E, A
- ☐ Feel this piece “in 2” – 75 BPM. Don’t let the repeated rhythm slow down. Push it forward!
- ☐ m. 1-9 – build the crescendo! Lots of dynamic changes throughout...
- ☐ m. 9-23 – “pass” the quarter notes from section to section. Accent the quarter notes.
- ☐ m. 23-39 – Col legno: count carefully! Watch for beat 1 so you are together. Cello: feel in 2. Do not drag tempo. Bass: m. 38 is SUPER important. Get into bridge, push, and get a big sound.
- ☐ m. 39-53 – 2nd/Viola: keep tempo steady. Be alert. 1st/Cello/Bass: Powerful melody. Watch releases. Cut off together. Count all notes. Watch accidental notes for intonation.
- ☐ m. 61-88 – WATCH!; “Place” notes on correct beat. Use some body motion to signal that you are starting or changing notes. Get a warm sound by using a good amount of bow, but don’t push hard and get a bit closer to the fingerboard. Bring out all moving parts (quarter notes). Observer all dynamic markings. WATCH! WATCH! WATCH! WATCH! Did I mention that you should watch?!?
- ☐ D.C. a Coda – Don’t forget to go to the CODA on the second time through!! 105-end build up the volume. Don’t get overly crazy with the amount of bow. Fortissimo can still be obtained with small bows – just push into the string and play near the bridge.

Uniform

- ☐ **Concert:** All black. No short skirts, t-shirts, tennis shoes, jeans. See handbook on website for details.

Signoff

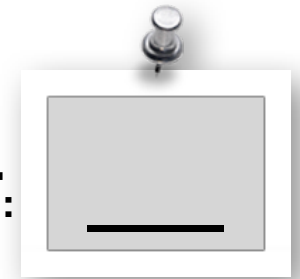
I certify that I did indeed practice the above and have made final music preparations for our concert on Tuesday, October 19. I have my uniform ready and understand I need to arrive at Darby HS by 6:00 PM.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Tharp 6th Grade Orchestra Home Practice Organizer

Name _____ HPO#: _____ Start Date: _____

FINAL
Due Date: _____



This Week's Practice Assignment:

1. Method Book: _____ This week's learning focus: _____
2. Sheet Music: _____ 3. Sheet Music: _____
4. Sheet Music: _____ 5. Sheet Music: _____
6. Upcoming Playing Test(s): _____ 7. _____
8. Important Announcements: _____

Day 1 is *Wednesday* of each week. HPO's are started and due each Monday. Friday is the final day you can turn in an HPO, after Friday it becomes a zero. **You must have at least THREE 20 minute practice sessions each week to earn the 50 points.**

Day:	Day 1 (Monday)	Day 2 (Tuesday)	Day 3 (Wednesday)	Day 4 (Thursday)	Day 5 (Friday)	Day 6 (Saturday)	Day 7 (Sunday)
Date:							
Minutes Practiced:							
What did you practice? (#'s)							
Parent Initials: (on days practiced)							

I confirm that my child practiced the assignments listed above for the amount of time stated on this chart.

Parent Signature _____ Date _____ ☐ I left comments or questions on the back.
(check)

This form must be COMPLETE and SIGNED. If information is missing, you will receive reduced credit (see grading rubric).

Grading -- Worth a total of 100 points...

- ☒ Completed Assignment Section - 20 points
- ☒ Five practice sessions completed - 50 points
- ☒ Parent Initial for each day practiced - 10 points
- ☒ Parent signature/date at end of week - 20 points

Use the online tools! <http://music.hilliardschools.org>

Why do we have to use HPO's? A practice organizer will help you *understand* what you have to practice, remind you of *what* needs to be practiced, and allow you to set *goals* for yourself. Everyone must put in their fair share!

Your Grade

(Mr. Laux's Use Only)

Posting A Rehearsal Online

- Record a rehearsal and post the audio online
- Students visit the website, listen, and provide commentary
- Create specific guidelines for feedback, questions/prompts, or a rubric for students to submit
- Ask students to compare recordings from two different rehearsals, highlighting areas of improvement

Recording and Posting Excerpts of a Rehearsal

- Record rehearsal with Garageband
- Upload audio to SoundCloud
- Share link or embed audio on your website with SoundCloud
- Students (and teacher!) can listen at home and assess themselves.
- Students respond via an online form (or on paper)

Demo

Other Technology Resources

- SmartMusic
- *Practice First* by MusicFirst.com
- Sightreading Factory
- Plethora of apps for phones and tablets

Special Thanks!



Contact Me!



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facebook.com/drcharleslaux



@charleslaux



Slides and more available at:

www.OrchestraTeacher.net